

JOSIAH HAIGLER PLANTATION HOUSE  
Highway 37  
Burkville vicinity  
Lowndes County  
Alabama

HABS No. A1-884

HABS  
ALA,  
43-BURK.V,  
3A-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Southeast Region  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

HABS  
ALA  
43-BURK.  
3A-

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

## JOSIAH HAIGLER PLANTATION HOUSE

Location: 450 meters west of Highway 37, approximately  
4.3 km north of Highway 80 in Lowndes  
County, Alabama

USGS Autaugaville Quadrangle, Universal  
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 16 .545570  
.3574250

Present Owner: General Electric - Montgomery Project  
Lowndes County Road 40, Route 1, Box 9-D  
Burkville, Alabama 36725

Present Occupant: Vacant

Most Recent Use: Residence

Significance: The Josiah Haigler house is a large ante-  
bellum plantation house constructed in  
northeast Lowndes County. The Haigler  
family were prominent planters and the house  
and site are significant examples of the  
historical and architectural development of  
the area. The house remains intact despite  
years of vacancy.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: 1841. During the early 1920s a book of Lowndes County cemetery records was prepared by local historians and given to the State Library and Archives in Montgomery. The book describes the Haigler Plantation and states that the house was built in 1841 by Y. W. Graves who two years later sold the house to Josiah Haigler. This information was received from Lewis Haigler, son of Josiah Haigler and occupant of the house at the time of the study.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The chain of ownership for all properties in the Burkville Multiple Resource Area is incomplete due to incomplete county records. The following is the most complete chronological progression possible according to identifiable deed and will records. Reference is to the Clerks's office in the Lowndes County Courthouse in Hayneville, Alabama.

- 1825 Land Patent 1599, Volume 6, page 206,  
recorded April 9, 1825.  
Original land patent given to Barton Stone  
for land containing Haigler House site.
  - c. 1830 Land passes to Y. W. or William Graves in  
unlocated transaction.
  - 1843 Y. W. Graves sells the property to Josiah  
Haigler in unlocated transaction.
  - 1877 Deed August 13, 1877, Book L, page 368.  
Josiah F. Haigler  
to  
wife Mary and to son, Lewis
  - 1927 Will 1927, Book D, page 365  
Lewis Haigler  
to  
Granddaughter Isabelle Watson
  - 1974 December 17, 1974, Will Book G, page 598  
William Watson  
to  
daughter Edith Irwin
- 4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown.
  - 5. Original plans and construction: None.
  - 6. Alterations and additions: Office wing off the  
southwest corner of the main house, ca. 1860;  
kitchen wing off the north door of the central hall,  
ca. 1870.

B. Historical Context:

The Haigler House was constructed in 1841 by Y. W. Graves who was the son of William Graves. The Graves family moved to this section of Lowndes County in the early 1820s and Y. W. Graves acquired this property during those years. In 1841 he built the house which was sold two years later to Josiah Haigler. The Haigler family moved to Lowndes County from South Carolina and became part of the slave holding planter class characteristic of Alabama's "Black Belt". By 1855 Haigler cultivated several hundred acres in rice and cotton. Haigler also owned 23 slaves which was well above the county average of 12 per household. Haigler also had diversified business interests as shown through his part ownership in a factory in Autaugaville.

With the Civil War Haigler lost his investment in slaves but in spite of this loss Haigler continued to prosper unlike several of his neighbors. In 1870 Haigler purchased 277 acres of adjoining land to increase his holdings and his family continued farming using the tenant and sharecropper systems involving black labor. The farm then evolved in a fashion typical of the "Black Belt" during the past century. Cotton continued to be the main cash crop for many years but each season eventually resulted in soil exhaustion and the land was converted to other uses.

Josiah Haigler died in 1876 and his property became divided among his children. His son, Lewis Haigler, continued to live in the family's plantation home and he farmed the land raising cattle until his death in 1927. During these years various outbuildings were constructed for use by the family and tenants. The Haigler family built several frame houses and a commissary building along Highway 37 on the eastern boundary of their land. These were used for many years by tenant farmers and renters.

Ownership of the original house passed to Lewis Haigler's daughter, Isabelle, whose sister and brother Mildred and Mark Haigler occupied the house until 1963. Since that time the house has been vacant. In addition to outbuildings on the property the Haigler family cemetery is also located near the home.

A component of the site is the Haigler family cemetery, located west of the house. This cemetery has ten marked graves and was in use from 1870 to 1939. It contains the graves of owners Josiah Haigler, Lewis Haigler and their wives and children. A cemetery for slaves and tenants of the plantation is also located at a short distance from the house.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Old Haigler Plantation House is a free-standing structure in the Burkeville vicinity. It is a good example of a transitional Federal to Greek Revival structure with its wide front porch and Georgian central hall plan.
2. Condition of fabric: The overall condition of the main house and associated wings ranges from fair to dilapidated.

- a. Main House: The overall structure of the house is in good condition, the floors sound and level. Only two major holes exist in the roof, resulting in interior water damage in these locations. The interior has not been maintained and finishes have deteriorated. All mantles and doors were removed and stored by Montgomery Landmarks to avoid theft or vandalism prior to the survey of the house.
- b. Office Wing: The two room office wing is in fair condition, its roof is relatively sound, and only the front porch floor is in a dilapidated state.
- c. Kitchen Wing: This wing is in dilapidated condition, the roof structure having numerous holes and sags and the floors and other structural elements exhibiting a significant degree of deterioration and sagging.

Doors and mantles have been removed from both wings as well prior to recording.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions:

- a. Main House: This 1-1/2 story structure is a rectangle 48'-4" wide by 50'-5" deep.
- b. Office Wing: A one story structure, this component is 36'-4" wide by 24'-3" deep.
- c. Kitchen Wing: A one story structure, this component is 15'-0" wide by 28'-8" long.

2. Foundations: The foundations of all three components of this structure consist of regularly spaced brick pier foundations. These piers were originally pencilled, traces of which are still visible in more protected locations.

3. Walls: The siding of all three components is weatherboarding. The average exposure is 5-1/2". Cornerboards on the front (south) wall of the main house are flat, 6-1/2" x 4-1/2". The corner-boards of the office and kitchen wings are 3-1/2 x 3-1/2".

4. Structural system, framing: The house components are constructed of hand-hewn timbers of mortise and tenon construction, fastened with wood pegs. Wood sills of the main house are 9" x 12", while on the office wing the sill is 8" x 8". Other visible

structural components on the main house were vertical and diagonal construction members 4" x 3" to 6".

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The major porch is the L-shaped porch fronting the main house and office wing. Built in two stages, that of the main house had six square pillars and is 8'-5" deep x 48'-4" wide. That of the office wing 6'-0" deep by 36'-4" wide. Both have tongue and groove board floors (5-3/4" wide) and flush plank ceilings. The porch roofs are supported by built-up plank beams following the perimeter of each porch.

The pillars of the main house porch are square and are 9-3/4" at the base, tapering to 9" at the capital. The pillars have no base and only simple capitals consisting of applied mouldings.

The railings consisted of circular handrails, nearly rectangular base rails and square spindles. There is evidence of the railing for the main house porch continuing on the west side. This was removed with the construction of the office wing and its porch. The main house porch was reached by a center stairway (now missing), while the office wing porch was approached from each end by wood stairways.

6. Chimneys: The main house has three existing external chimneys with corbelled bases and caps and stepped shoulders. A fourth chimney (probably only for a stove flue) was removed from the east wall of the northeast room. The rear wing has an end (north) external brick chimney of similar construction. These chimneys are connected to the body of the house until they step inwards, at which point they are free-standing to bypass the roof eaves.

The southeast room chimney has been rebuilt above the first floor. A fireplace formerly existed in the east second floor room. This was removed and the chimney flue was rebuilt accordingly.

The office wing has a paired fireplaces between the rooms that has a chimney projecting through the roof to the west of the ridge line. This chimney also has a corbelled cap.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The entrance to the central hall of the main house consists of a double door with sidelites and a full width transom. The sidelites have four panes above a

wood panel corresponding in height to the interior wainscot. The transom has nine panes.

The design of the surround consists of pilasters framing the entire opening as well as separating the sidelites from the doorway. The capitals of these pilasters are formed en ressault, by an outward movement of the decorative cornice below the transom. A similar cornice, supported at each end by flat pilasters, is found above the transom.

The rear entrance to the central hall consists of a double door with a four pane transom above. A side door in the east wall from the northeast room is approached directly by wood steps. The existing door consists of three panels, the top horizontal and two lower vertical panels. It is 3'-0" wide by 7'-0" high.

The rear wing is reached by a door in the south wall opposite the rear central hall door across the open breezeway. The breezeway is reached by a set of wood steps. Another door in the east wall at the northeast corner is also reached by wood steps. The door in this latter location is a four panel design that is 3'-0" x 6'-10" with flat exterior trim 3-1/2" wide.

- b. Windows and shutters: The windows of the main house and office wing are 9-over-9 light double-hung sash. They are protected by two panel operable louver shutters. The second floor windows of the main house and those of the rear wing are 6-over-6 light double-hung sash and also have two panel operable louver shutters. All window trim consists of flat boards.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: All components have single slope gable roofs. The main house and office wing have ridgelines parallelling their main facades. Earlier wood shingles have been covered by diamond pattern asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The eaves of the main house and office wing are designed as projecting box eaves with a deep fascia board and several levels of crown mould forming a basic entablature. There is a slight projection of the

eave at the gable ends, with a short return of the cornice.

The rear wing has a projecting box eave with simple moulding, flush at the gable end (north).

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The house is divided into three distinct sections: the main house, the office wing, and the rear (kitchen) wing. (See plans at end)
  - a. First floor: The main house is a traditional wide central hall plan with two rooms on each side. The office wing consists of two rooms in a traditional "saddle bag" arrangement, having a double fireplace between the two rooms. The rear wing originally consisted of a short breezeway section and one large room. This room has been subdivided into two sections, the rear (north) portion being the smaller of the two.
  - b. Second floor: A second floor exists only in the main house portion of the structure. This consists of two rooms, one over the east pair of first floor rooms and another over the central hall and west pair of first floor rooms. While these rooms run the full width of the house, they are limited in depth, being enclosed by knee walls on the north and south.
2. Stairways: Interior stairways are found only in the main portion of the house leading to the two second floor rooms. Separate stairways lead to each room. The stair to the larger of the second floor rooms is accessible from the central hall, while the stair to the smaller room is reached through the northeast first floor room. Both stairways consist of an initial winder section (4 risers 8 - 8-1/2" high and 4 treads) and steep straight run (13 risers 8-1/2" high). Short railings exist at the top of the stairways where the stairs project slightly into each room.
3. Flooring:
  - a. Main House: Plank floors are found throughout the main house. These run north-south in the central hall and east-west in the four rooms of the first floor. All vary in width from 6" to



7" On the second floor the plank flooring runs east west and vary in width from 10" to 12".

- b. Office Wing: Floors consist of wide planks running east-west.
- c. Rear Wing: Floors consist of 11" wide planks running north-south.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

- a. Main House: All first floor rooms have a continuous wood wainscot averaging 2'-5" in height (see illustrations at end for profile). The upper walls and ceiling of the central wall consist of random width flush wood planks, while elsewhere on the first floor the upper walls and ceilings are plaster on wood lath. On the second floor the walls and ceilings are plaster on wood lath and have simple 6-1/2" high baseboards.
- b. Office Wing: The walls and ceilings are plaster on wood lath.
- c. Rear Wing: All walls, including the north side of the added interior wall, have wood wainscots. The upper walls and ceiling are flush wood planks 11" wide. The partition wall is a 3-1/4" thick stud wall with a tongue-and-groove finish. The breezeway has clapboard siding on the walls and a tongue-and-groove wood board ceiling. A partition wall with a doorway was added to partially enclose the open breezeway to the west of the connecting north and south doors.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: All major doors had been removed from the house to storage prior to recording and only the opening and trim sizes were documented. The entry to the main house was a double door 4'- 4-1/2" wide by 7'-0" high. The double door at the north (rear) end of the central hall was 4'-0" wide by 7'-0" high. Other doorways on the first floor are 3'-0" wide by 7'-0" high. With the exception of the front entry door where the surround is 6-1/2" wide, all other trim is 4" wide. (See illustrations at end for profile.)

Doorways in the rear wing are 3'-0" wide by 7'-0" high.

- b. Windows: Windows of the original section of the house are 9-over-9 light double-hung sash that are 2'-11" x 6'-7-3/4". These windows sit on top of the panelled wainscot and have 4" wide trim with decorative moulding on the outer edge of the lintel and jambs. In the southwest room an additional decorative piece was added to the top of the lintel projecting outwards as a very low triangle.

The windows of the office wing are also 9-over-9 light double-hung sash, while those of the second floor of the original section and the rear wing are 6-over-6 light double-hung sash 3'-11" x 4'-6".

6. Decorative features and trim: All mantles and major doors were removed from the house prior to recording. The existing major decorative elements include the front entry surround and the interior wood wainscot (29 to 29-1/2" high) of the main house.
7. Hardware: No door or window hardware exists on the interior of historic interest exists. One 4-1/2" x 6" lock box still exists on the exterior door on the east side of the main house.
8. Mechanical equipment:
- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: No mechanical systems exist. The fireplaces and/or stoves most likely provided heat.
- b. Lighting: The structure has been wired for ceiling lights and wall outlets.
- c. Plumbing: The northwest room of the main house was converted to a bathroom and the water and drain lines were extended to the kitchen in the northeast room.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Old Haigler house is located 450 meters west of the Highway 37. The current approach is via an unpaved lane that winds through pastures to reach the house from the northeast. (The house was originally approached by a road from the southeast. The principal elevation of the house is oriented towards the south.

2. Historic landscape design: The main approach to the house from the south still has indications of an historic landscape arrangement consisting of a circular drive or walk lined with crepe myrtles, in the center of which may have been a circular flower bed. The house is set within numerous mature trees that have no particular formal design relationship with the house. A small pecan grove is still located approximately 50 meters west of the house.
3. Outbuildings: To the east of the house is a small barn structure of relatively recent origin. Further to the east is a spring. The Haigler family cemetery is located to the southwest of the house. Other buildings currently associated with the Old Haigler House are located approximately one mile to the south and east along Highway 37.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings: No drawings located.

B. Early Views: No photographs located.

C. Interviews:

Haigler, Mrs. Margaret. Hayneville, Alabama. August 20, 1983.

Shreiner, Mrs. Charles. Burkville, Alabama. August 19, 1983.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

"Lowndes County Cemetery Records." Undated manuscript on file, Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Lowndes County Deed, Inventory, Minute and Will Records 1830-1983. Lowndes County Courthouse, Hayneville, Alabama.

United States Census Records, 1850, 1855, 1860.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Boyd, Minnie Clare. Alabama in the Fifties. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931.

Haigler, William H. Haiglers of South Carolina,  
History and Genealogy. Montgomery, Alabama:  
Private Printing, 1975.

- E. Supplemental Material: Additional historical/genealogical information on file with The Ehrenkrantz Group/Building Conservation Technology, Inc., Nashville, Tn.

Prepared by: Michael Emrick, Historical Architect, and Philip Thomason Architectural Historian  
The Ehrenkrantz Group/Building Conservation Technology, Inc.  
August - September 1983

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project was conducted by The Ehrenkrantz Group/Building Conservation Technology, Inc., of Nashville, Tennessee under contract from Environmental Research and Technology, Inc. for General Electric - Montgomery Project, Burkville, Alabama.

Project personnel included Michael Emrick, Project Architect (project coordination, architectural data); James Thompson, Architect (measured drawings and sketch plans); Philip Thomason, project historian; and Barry Starkey, photographer. Agency involvement included the Mobile District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service.